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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 66th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. ABELIAN (Armenia)
(Vice-Chairman)

Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions: Mr. MSELLE

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In the absence of Mr. Vilchez Asher (Nicaragua), Mr. Abelian (Armenia), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 125: FINANCING OF THE UNITED NATIONS MISSION FOR THE REFERENDUM IN WESTERN SAHARA (continued) (A/50/655/Add.2)

1. Mr. TAKASU (Controller), introducing the revised cost estimates of the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) for the period 1 July 1996-30 June 1997, said that the General Assembly, in its decision 50/446 B, had authorized the Secretary-General to enter into commitments in the amount of $7.8 million gross for the maintenance of MINURSO for the period 1 July-30 September 1996. The Advisory Committee would, however, be unable to report to the General Assembly before the end of the period covered by the commitment authority, which would create a financial and legal lacuna. Accordingly, the Secretary-General was seeking authorization for an amount of $2.6 million gross to continue MINURSO through October.

AGENDA ITEM 128: FINANCING OF THE UNITED NATIONS PROTECTION FORCE, THE UNITED NATIONS CONFIDENCE RESTORATION OPERATION IN CROATIA, THE UNITED NATIONS PREVENTIVE DEPLOYMENT FORCE AND THE UNITED NATIONS PEACE FORCES HEADQUARTERS (continued) (A/50/696/Add.6 and 7)

2. Mr. TAKASU (Controller) said that financial arrangements for the liquidation of completed operations in the former Yugoslavia were in place only to the end of September. Since the Advisory Committee would not be in a position to consider the relevant reports until late September, the Secretary-General was requesting commitment authority in an amount of $6.2 million gross to continue liquidation through October.

3. Mr. KELLY (Ireland), speaking on behalf of the European Union and the associate countries of the Czech Republic, Cyprus, Malta, Poland, Romania and Slovakia, regretted that the performance report for the period 1 July-31 December 1995 (A/50/696/Add.7), while dated 5 August 1996, had apparently been issued only on 29 August 1996, even though the General Assembly, in its resolution 50/235, had specifically requested submission of the report by 15 August. The Secretariat should indicate why the report had been issued so late, since 15 August had been chosen to allow for prior consideration of the report by the Advisory Committee and thus completion of normal budgetary procedures so as to allow the Fifth Committee to take a substantive decision. It would now be necessary to take yet another interim decision.

4. While the European Union did not favour the granting of commitment authority without providing the Secretary-General with the necessary authority to assess at the same time, it was prepared to make an exception and to agree to a further month's commitment authority to meet the expenses of United Nations Peace Forces headquarters (UNPF) through the end of October. The Advisory Committee should give priority to consideration of the performance report so that the Fifth Committee could take up the item again at the earliest opportunity in the forthcoming regular session. There was also a need for

action on the substantial unencumbered balance reportedly remaining in the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) account.

5. The European Union shared the concern expressed by the Advisory Committee regarding the extent of outstanding third party claims submitted to UNPF, and looked forward to proposals from the Secretary-General to limit United Nations liability in that regard and to provide for simpler, more efficient and prompt settlement of such claims.

6. The need to make provision in the UNPF budget for the hiring of contractual services in relation to environmental clean-up also gave cause for concern. The Secretary-General should develop guidelines, to be consistently applied in all future peace-keeping missions, governing how the United Nations should deal with such issues. The limited responsibilities of the United Nations in that regard should be made clear.

7. The European Union wished to draw attention to the amount of over $700 million still owed in unpaid contributions to the UNPROFOR account, and to remind those in arrears to pay what they owed so as to ensure that troop-contributing countries, which were effectively subsidizing their non-payment, were fully reimbursed.

8. The European Union was also concerned over the amounts owed to UNPF troop contributors, many of which were European Union member States. Attention needed to be given to the real concern among troop contributors at delays in reaching agreement on what was owed and on the criteria used in reaching such decisions in the context of peace-keeping operations in the former Yugoslavia.

9. It was the general position of the European Union that all arrears owed to the Organization must be fully discharged and that all Member States must honour their legal obligations to pay their assessments promptly, in full and without conditions.

10. Mr. TAKASU (Controller) said that the Secretariat made the utmost effort to comply with deadlines established by the General Assembly, although in some cases that was not possible. When the General Assembly, in June, had set a 15 August deadline for submission of the performance report the Secretariat had noted that a number of complex financing decisions had been taken by the General Assembly. Although the Secretariat had done its best, and had in fact finalized the report on 31 July, it had not been possible to issue it in all languages until 29 August, in which connection he noted that the resources available for conference servicing had been significantly reduced in the current biennium. The Office of Conference and Support Services, which had a heavy workload in August processing documentation for the General Assembly, was doing its best with a lower level of resources.

11. Nevertheless he wished to assure the European Union and the Fifth Committee that the Secretariat would make every effort to meet deadlines, and would indicate whether there was likely to be any difficulty in so doing.

AGENDA ITEM 134: FINANCING OF THE UNITED NATIONS OBSERVER MISSION IN LIBERIA (continued)

12. Mr. TAKASU (Controller) said that commitment authority in respect of the United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia (UNOMIL) had lapsed at the end of September, but that the mandate had been extended through the end of November. Pending consideration at the end of September of the cost estimates for the period 1 July 1996-30 June 1997, the Secretary-General was requesting commitment authority through October in an amount of $1.1 million gross.

AGENDA ITEM 121: UNITED NATIONS COMMON SYSTEM (continued) (A/50/30 and Add.1)

13. Mr. KELLY (Ireland), speaking on behalf of the European Union and the associate countries of the Czech Republic, Cyprus, Malta, Poland, Romania and Slovakia, said that the report on the conditions of service of the Professional and higher categories (A/50/30/Add.1) dealt with net remuneration comparisons and issues arising from the International Civil Service Commission study to identify the highest paid national civil service - questions of the utmost importance to the common system, on which the Fifth Committee had been unable to agree at the regular session. The European Union took note of the further report.

14. While it had been the clear intention of the General Assembly to revert to the matter before the end of the fiftieth regular session, in view of the limited time now available and the fact that the margin was within range the European Union agreed to defer the item to the fifty-first session. Nevertheless he hoped that the Fifth Committee would be in a position to consider all aspects of the common system at the earliest possible opportunity at that session.

15. Mr. TOYA (Japan) said that his delegation regretted that it had not proved possible to complete consideration of the matter at the current session, given the responsibility of the General Assembly to all participating organizations of the common system. He trusted that the matter would be concluded early in the fifty-first session.

16. The CHAIRMAN suggested that the Committee should recommend to the General Assembly that it should defer its consideration of the report on the conditions of service of the Professional and higher categories: examination of the Noblemaire principle and its application (A/50/30/Add.1) to the fifty-first session.

17. It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 10.55 a.m.